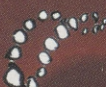


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Director Robert Wilson and composer Philip Glass reunite for *Monsters of Grace*, an opera for the digital age. *Randy Gener* dons the 3-D glasses.

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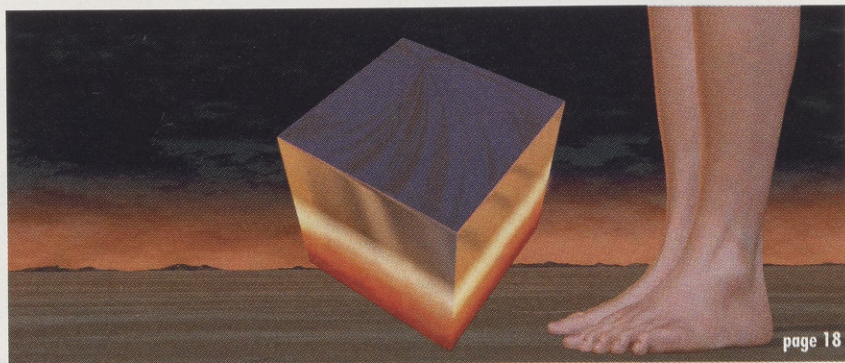
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CHRISTIAN STEINER

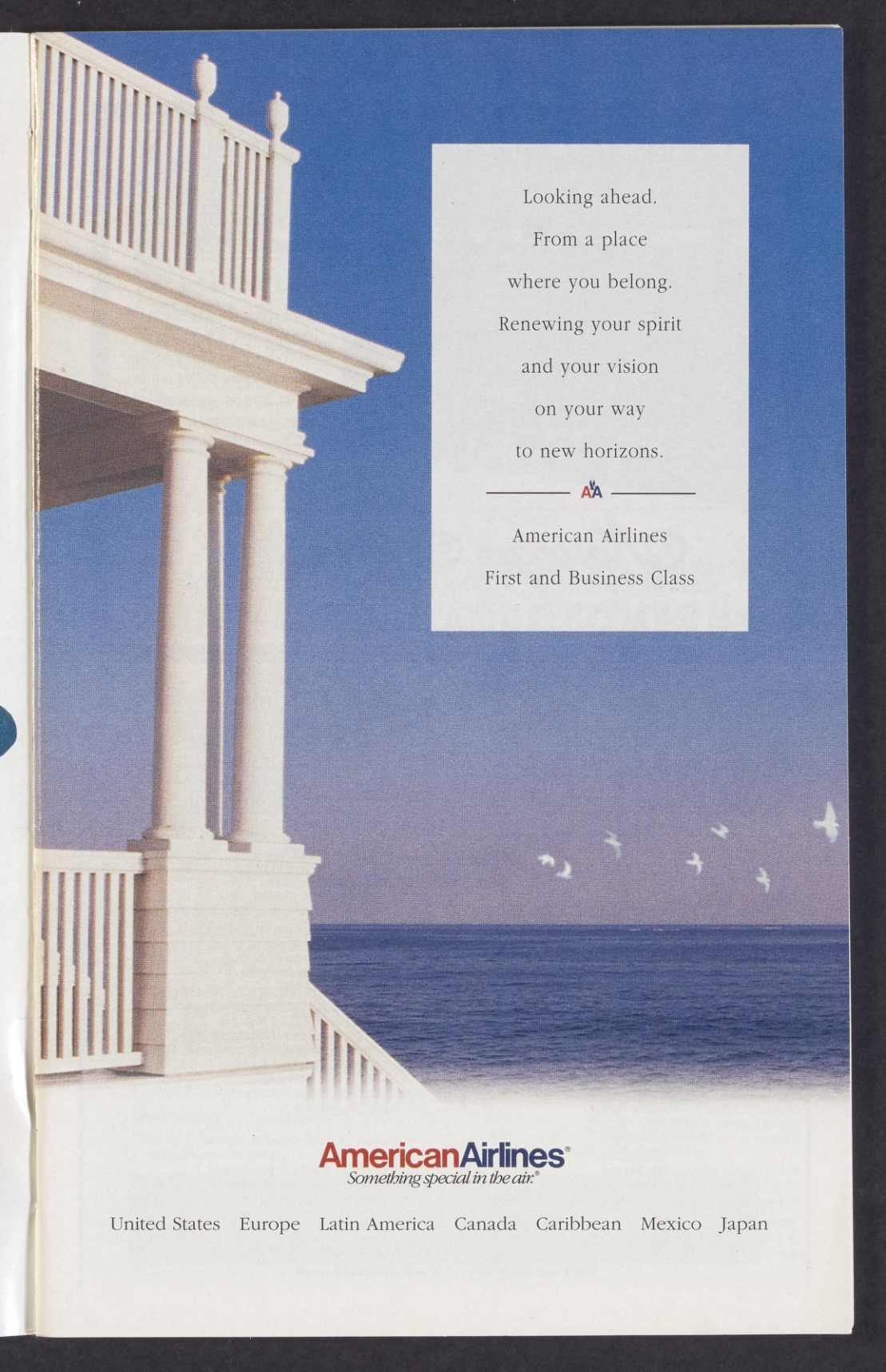


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LOIS GREENFIELD



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Cal Performances

March 1999

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Cal Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY

PATRON INFORMATION

The Cal Performances Ticket Office is located in the lobby of Zellerbach Hall and is open from 10 am – 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday; 10 am – 2 pm, Saturday and Sunday. Visa and MasterCard and phone charges are accepted. For more information, call 510.642.9988.

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AT THE PERFORMANCES

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Elevators in Zellerbach Hall can be found on the Orchestra level, house left. They access the Mezzanine level only.

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Parking may be difficult to find close to curtain time. For parking maps and suggestions, please call the Ticket Office at 510.642.9988.

Pay phones are located on the Orchestra level, house left, in Zellerbach Hall, and in the west hallway in Hertz Hall.

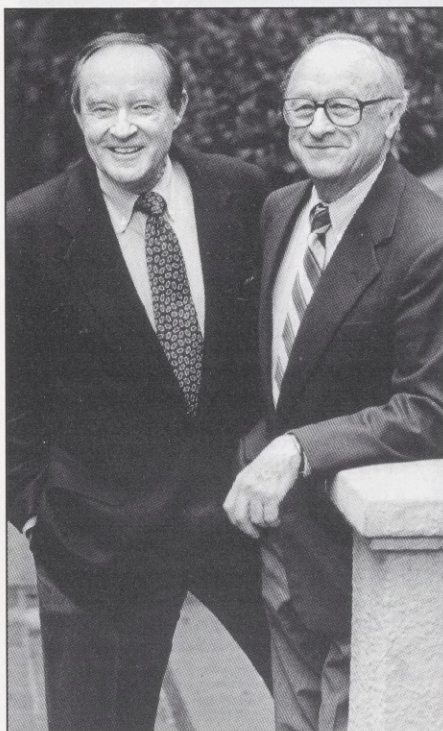
Program changes. Due to the nature of the performing arts, all programs are subject to change.

Restrooms are located on the Orchestra level in Zellerbach Hall (Women's rooms at house left, Men's rooms at house right). In Hertz Hall, restrooms are located on the main floor in the front lobby.

Smoking is prohibited in all areas of the performance halls, including lobbies and restrooms.

Water fountains are located on the Orchestra and Mezzanine levels of Zellerbach Hall and throughout the lobby level of Hertz Hall.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Cal Performances director Robert W. Cole with chairman Earl F. Cheit

As you settle into your seat—whether it's in Zellerbach Hall, Hertz Hall, or First Congregational Church—I'd like to ask you to take a moment and think about the many donors who have made this performance possible (their names are listed on pages 24–24C). They have responded generously to our appeals because they know that ticket prices alone cannot cover the cost of presenting the outstanding events that audiences have come to expect from Cal Performances. I ask you to think about them

because it is fair to say that everyone who attends Cal Performances events is in their debt.

If your name is not yet on that list, I'd like to ask you now to consider joining this essential community of arts lovers by making your own gift to Cal Performances.

How will your gift be used? It will enable Cal Performances to continue to bring you some of the world's most creative and acclaimed talent. It will help us maintain the practice—unique among major universities—of offering tickets to Cal students at half-price. It will provide funds to commission new work, such as the upcoming American premiere of *Peony Pavilion*, directed by Peter Sellars and composed by Tan Dun. And your contribution will also help support our arts education programs for Cal students and for children in schools throughout the Bay Area.

As a donor, you will receive, depending on the level of your gift, parking privileges, recognition in the program, and special opportunities to meet some of your favorite artists. Page 23C gives you information on how to direct your gift.

Best of all, as you enjoy another exceptional Cal Performances season next year, you will have the additional pleasure of knowing that you helped make it possible.

Our development staff can be reached at 510.643.8783. They look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you, and enjoy the show!

Earl F. Cheit

Earl F. Cheit, Chairman
Cal Performances Board of Trustees

Cal Performances

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Season



Monsters of Grace

by Robert Wilson
& Philip Glass

TUE-SAT, APR 13-17, 8 PM
ZELLERBACH HALL
\$22, \$32, \$42

Together again for the first time since *Einstein on the Beach*, director/designer Robert Wilson and composer Philip Glass use state-of-the-art 3D animation, rendered in 70mm film, to create a work as "exquisitely beautiful and elusive as a dream" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). Sung in English, the libretto features ecstatic love songs based on the spiritual poetry of Sufi mystic Rumi, performed live by the Philip Glass Ensemble and guest soloists.

Mark Morris Dance Group

THU-SAT, MAR 18-20, 8 PM
AND SUN, MAR 21, 3 PM
ZELLERBACH HALL \$20, \$35, \$45

The "Mozart of modern dance" (*The Washington Post*) and his company return with joyful interpretations of Brahms love songs plus a world premiere set to Handel's *Dixit Dominus* (all performed live).

PROGRAM: LOVE SONG WALTZES, SET TO BRAHMS' LIEBESLIEDER WALZER, OP. 52; NEW LOVE SONG WALTZES, SET TO BRAHMS' NEUE LIEBESLIEDER WALZER, OP. 65; DIXIT DOMINUS (WORLD PREMIERE), SET TO MUSIC BY HANDEL



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CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Peony Pavilion

by Tang Xianzu (1598, Ming Dynasty)

Translated by Cyril Birch

Friday and Saturday, March 5-6, 1999; 7:30 pm

Sunday, March 7, 1999; 3 pm

Zellerbach Hall

Peter Sellars, *director*

George Tsypin, *scene designer*

Dunya Ramicova, *costume designer*

James F. Ingalls, *lighting designer*

Janet Kalas, *sound designer*

Diane J. Malecki, *producer*

Part I

Traditional *kunqu* music
with interludes by Tan Dun

Part II

Composed by Tan Dun (1998)

CAST

Part I

<i>Du Liniang</i>	Hua Wenyi, <i>kunqu</i>
<i>Liu Mengmei</i>	Michael Schumacher, <i>dancer</i>

<i>Du Liniang</i>	Lauren Tom, <i>actress</i>
<i>Liu Mengmei</i>	Joel de la Fuente, <i>actor</i>

<i>Madam Du/Flower Spirit</i>	Takayo Fischer, <i>actress</i>
-------------------------------	--------------------------------

<i>Spring Fragrance/Sister Stone</i>	Shi Jiehua, <i>kunqu</i>
--------------------------------------	--------------------------

Casting of actors by Bernard Telsey Casting
Bernie Telsey, Will Cantler, David Vaccari

Part II

<i>Du Liniang</i>	Ying Huang, <i>soprano</i>
<i>Liu Mengmei</i>	Lin Qiang Xu, <i>tenor</i>

PROGRAM

MUSICIANS

Steven Osgood	<i>conductor</i>
Min Xiao-Fen	<i>pipa</i>
Wang Zhensheng	<i>dizi and erhu (Part I), percussion: bangu drum (Chinese opera drum), Chinese cymbal, small gong, large bass drum, water gong, and ratchet</i>
David Cossin	<i>percussion: drum set, udu drum, guiro, Chinese cymbal, brush, bow, flexitone, small Chinese finger bells, and cowbells</i>
Bruce Gremo	<i>electronic Midi horn, xun, dizi, and synthesizer programming</i>
Joseph Celli	<i>electronic Midi horn, piri, and taeponso</i>
Yuanlin Chen	<i>electronic sampler</i>

Pre-recorded solo singing and vocalizing by Tan Dun

*The pre-recorded choral music heard during this performance is provided courtesy
of SONY Classical, from the upcoming release of Tan Dun's Bitter Love.*

PRODUCTION

Elizabeth Burgess	<i>production stage manager</i>
Scott MacGregor	<i>technical director</i>
Julia Carnahan	<i>company manager</i>
Janet Kalas	<i>audio engineer</i>
Kevin Higa	<i>video operator, producer's assistant</i>
Loren Bevans	<i>assistant costume designer, wardrobe supervisor</i>
Victoria Stewart	<i>assistant stage manager</i>
Susan Pertel Jain	<i>translator, surtitle operator</i>
Michael Brown	<i>lighting design assistant</i>
Mary Chun	<i>rehearsal vocal coach</i>

*Co-Produced by: Vienna Festival, executive producer; MC93 Bobigny (Paris);
Barbican Centre (London); Cal Performances (University of California, Berkeley)*

*Cal Performances thanks the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council
Challenge Grant Program, the Center for the Arts at the University of California, Berkeley,
and the L. J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation for their support of Peony Pavilion.*

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*Cal Performances would like to thank The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
and the Zellerbach Family Fund for their generous support.*

"The Tale We Tell is of a Love Three Incarnations Long"

PART ONE

Du Liniang is the only daughter of Du Bao, Prefect of Nan'an, and his wife, Madam Du; she is 16 years old and not yet betrothed. She nonetheless grows restless with unnamed longings as spring comes to the garden outside her chamber. In Guangdong, to the south, Liu Mengmei ("Willow, Dream of Apricot"), an orphaned and penniless young student, is also restless because of a dream in which a beautiful young girl tells him that he must first find her if he is to succeed in the Imperial Examinations. Back in Nan'an, Du Liniang goes into the garden, accompanied by her maid, Spring Fragrance. Overwhelmed by the springtime spectacle, she falls asleep after returning to her room and dreams of a young scholar who makes love to her in the garden. As he departs, Du Liniang awakens and is scolded by Madam Du for dreaming dangerously. Defying her mother's orders, she returns to the garden to pursue her dream, and finds instead an apricot tree, to which she becomes passionately attached. Lovesick, she refuses to eat, and as she nears death, she paints a self-portrait, requesting that it be buried near her in the garden. Angry that years of study have gone unrecognized, Liu Mengmei leaves Guangdong for the capital; in Nan'an, Madam Du watches helplessly as her daughter withdraws and dies of starvation. On the night of the Mid-autumn Festival, Du Liniang dies.

PART TWO

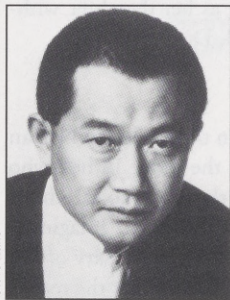
Stricken ill on his journey, Liu Mengmei has taken refuge in the shrine in the garden in Nan'an where Du Liniang lies buried. He has a fevered dream in which he is the judge in hell who releases Du Liniang from the "city of the wrongfully dead" to return to the world to search for her intended love. On waking, he discovers her portrait and falls in love with it. Imagining that it is a Buddhist icon, he offers his prayers and devotion. On the third anniversary of Du Liniang's death, Sister Stone, a Daoist priestess and guardian of her shrine, prays for the repose of Du Liniang's soul. Du Liniang's ghost is drawn by the prayers, and she discovers Liu in a room near the shrine calling to her portrait. She offers herself to him and they become lovers. Thinking her human, Liu proposes marriage, but Du Liniang tells him the time has not yet come to meet her parents. After they exchange marriage vows, she summons the courage to tell him she is a ghost. Liu is terrified but recovers, and Du Liniang commands him to exhume her body and bring it back to life. Assisted by Sister Stone, Liu opens Du Liniang's tomb and she is resurrected. The lovers depart for the capital on a boat accompanied by Sister Stone.

...

Du Liniang meets Liu Mengmei first in her dream, then as a ghost, and again as a mortal girl after being reborn by Peony Pavilion, on the Road of Three Lifetimes (*Sansheng lu*).

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Cyril Birch (*translator*) was born in Lancashire in 1925. He entered London University's School of Oriental and African Studies for a crash course in modern Chinese in preparation for service in British Army intelligence. After the war, he returned to the School, subsequently teaching Chinese language and literature there until 1960, when he moved to California to teach at UC Berkeley. Now retired, he divides his time between Berkeley and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. His books include *Stories from a Ming Collection*, *Chinese Myths and Fantasies*, and a two-volume *Anthology of Chinese Literature*. Scholars in Beijing have published a volume of his critical studies in their own translation. His latest book is *Scenes for Mandarins*, an introduction to the elite drama of the Ming period.

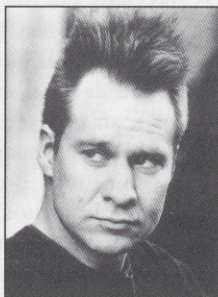


Steve Zairo

Tan Dun (*composer*) was born in 1957 in Hunan, China. After planting rice for two years during the Cultural Revolution, then working as an arranger in the provincial Peking Opera troupe,

he was selected for the Central Conservatory in Beijing. In 1986, a fellowship at Columbia University brought him to New York, where he completed the doctoral program in composition. His music has been performed throughout the world at venues such as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Suntory Hall in Japan, the BBC Proms in London, and the Bastille in Paris. Among his compositions are *Ghost Opera* (Kronos Quartet); the multimedia symphony *Red Forecaſt* (BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra); the audience-participation symphony *Orchestral Theatre II* (Tokyo Symphony); the score for the movie *Fallen*; and *Symphony 1997* (*Heaven Earth Mankind*), performed by cellist Yo-Yo Ma, the Imperial Bells Ensemble of China, and the Hong Kong Philharmonic. His opera *Marco Polo*, with a libretto by Paul Griffiths, was premiered at the Munich Biennale. Tan

Dun's commissions include an opera for the Metropolitan Opera in New York. He is the recipient of the 1998 Grawemeyer Award for music composition.



Peter Sellars (*director*) has directed more than 100 productions across the United States and abroad. A graduate of Harvard University, he studied in Japan, China, and India before becoming artistic director

of the Boston Shakespeare Company. At 26, he became director of the American National Theater at the Kennedy Center in Washington. Mr. Sellars has collaborated with the Wooster Group and been featured in Jean-Luc Godard's film *King Lear*. His feature film *The Cabinet of Dr. Ramirez* (which is silent and in color) stars Joan Cusack, Peter Gallagher, and Mikhail Baryshnikov. He was artistic director of the 1990 and 1993 Los Angeles Festivals, a grass roots, intercultural, and interdisciplinary civic experiment in a city where more than 120 languages are spoken, and is a professor of world arts and cultures at UCLA. Mr. Sellars' production of *The Merchant of Venice* was the basis for the BBC film *It Is Now Our Time*. He worked with composer John Adams and poet June Jordan on *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky*, an "earthquake/romance" that was premiered here in Berkeley. A frequent guest at Salzburg and Glyndebourne, he specializes in 20th-century opera, notably Messaien's *Saint François d'Assise*, Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*, Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*, and, with choreographer Mark Morris, the premiere of John Adams' and Alice Goodman's *Nixon in China* and *The Death of Klinghoffer*.

George Tsypin's (*scene designer*) designs have been seen at major opera houses, on Broadway, and in television and film. His opera work includes *Katerina Ismailova* and *Salome* (Kirov); *The Gambler* (La Scala and

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Paris); *Orfeo ed Euridice* (Wiener Festwochen and Zurich); *The Flying Dutchman* (Los Angeles, ENO, and Houston); *Die Zauberflöte* (Florence); *Oedipus Rex* (Saito Kinen Festival, Japan); and *Rigoletto* (Canadian Opera). For Peter Sellars, he has designed *The Cabinet of Dr. Ramirez* and productions including *Tannhäuser*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Don Giovanni*, *Ajax*, *Idiot's Delight*, *The Seagull*, *Theodora*, *Mathis der Maler*, and *Saint François d'Assise*. Televised concert projects include *Symphony for the Earth* and a concert with Wynton Marsalis. Mr. Tsy-pin recently designed Wagner's *Ring* for De Nederlandse Opera, Holland, concluding the full cycle in June of last year.

Dunya Ramicova (*costume designer*) was born in the former Czechoslovakia and studied at the Yale School of Drama. She has designed costumes for over 150 productions for theater, opera, film, and video in the United States and Europe. Her work has appeared at the Metropolitan Opera (premiere of *The Voyage* by Philip Glass and *I Lombardi* with Pavarotti), Covent Garden (*Alcina* and *Mathis der Maler*), the Glyndebourne Festival (*Theodora*), and the Salzburg Festival. She has frequently collaborated with Peter Sellars, including such productions as *Nixon in China*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, and the Mozart/da Ponte cycle. Her recent work includes *Ah, Wilderness* (Lincoln Center) and *Iphigénie en Tauride* (New York City Opera).

James F. Ingalls' (*lighting designer*) returns to Cal Performances, where he has designed John Adams' and June Jordan's *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky*, directed by Peter Sellars, and *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Platée*, all choreographed by Mark Morris. Recently, he designed *Quinceañera* for the St. Joseph Ballet, choreographed by Beth Burns; and *Oedipus Rex/Symphony of Psalms* and *The Rake's Progress* for De Nederlandse Opera, and *Le Grand Macabre* for Théâtre du Châtelet/Paris, all directed by Peter Sellars. Mr. Ingalls' other work in the Bay Area includes *How I Learned to Drive*, *Mac Teague*,

and *The Revenger* for Berkeley Repertory Theater; *Silver Ladders*, choreographed by Helgi Tomasson, and *El Grito*, choreographed by Lila York, for San Francisco Ballet; *The Duchess of Malfi* for ACT; and John Adams' *The Death of Klinghoffer* for San Francisco Opera.

Janet Kalas (*sound designer*) is a sound designer for theater and a scenic artist for film, theater, and video. She has designed sound for numerous productions in New York, in American regional theaters, and in Canada. Her recent credits include *As You Like It* at Center Stage in Baltimore; *Splash Hatch* at the Yale Repertory Theater; and *Limbo*, directed by John Sayles and filmed in Alaska. Ms. Kalas toured with Peter Sellars' *The Persians* in 1994.

Diane J. Malecki (*producer*) served as artistic administrator of the Guthrie Theater, executive director of the American National Theater, and producing director of BAM Opera (Brooklyn Academy of Music). Since 1990, she has worked as an independent producer, collaborating primarily with Peter Sellars. She has been engaged by La Monnaie, Opera de Lyon, San Francisco Opera, Salzburg Festival, MC93 Bobigny, the Helsinki Festival, and Lincoln Center to organize commissions and co-productions including *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *The Persians*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky*.

Elizabeth Burgess (*production stage manager*) has stage managed in the United States, England, Austria, Finland, Italy, Germany, and France. She has worked with Peter Sellars for many years and enjoys it very much. Ms. Burgess lives in New York City with Loren and her two cats and is very happy.

Takayo Fischer (*actress*), a California native, discovered a love for theater while interned in camps in Arkansas during World War II. Theater: *Sing to the Dawn* (Singapore), *Cabaret* and *Into the Woods* (East West Players, Los Angeles), *Joy Luck Club* (Long Wharf), *Tea* (Manhattan Theater Club), *The*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

World of Suzie Wong (Broadway). Television: *American Geisha*, *Beverly Hills 90210*. Film: *Showdown in Little Tokyo*, *Pacific Heights*.

Joel de la Fuente (*actor*) studied at Brown University and New York University. Theater: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *All's Well That Ends Well* (New York Shakespeare Festival); *America Dreaming*, with music by Tan Dun (Vineyard Theater). Television: *ER*, *High Incident*, *Space: Above and Beyond*. Film: *Roommates*, *Return to Paradise*. For Mom.

Hua Wenyi (*kunqu*) is the former artistic director of the Shanghai Kun Opera Company and one of China's foremost artists. In 1986, she was awarded the Plum Blossom Award, China's highest artistic honor, for her work in *The Jade Hairpin*. A specialist in refined female (*guimendan*) roles, she has performed throughout Asia, Europe, and North America. In 1990, she founded Hua Kun Opera, a Los Angeles-based organization producing Chinese theater. Hua Wenyi was made a National Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1997.

Ying Huang (*soprano*) graduated from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and won second prize at the Concours International de Chant in Paris. She is featured in the film *Madama Butterfly* and the television special *Christmas in Vienna with Plácido Domingo*. Opera: Nannetta in *Falstaff* (Cologne). Concerts: Houston Symphony Orchestra, Cologne Philharmonic, Lincoln Center, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. She has recorded Haydn's *LLsola disabitata* and a CD of operatic arias with the London Symphony Orchestra.

Shi Jiehua (*kunqu*) is a leading *kunqu* performer of vivacious young female roles, a graduate of the Shanghai Academy of Performing Arts, and a former member of the Shanghai Kunqu Troupe. She is a resident artist of the Kunqu Society in New York, director of the New York Kunqu Theater, and head teacher of the Kunqu Workshop.

Michael Schumacher (*dancer*) studied dance at the Juilliard School and has danced professionally with the Feld Ballet; Twyla Tharp Dance; the Companhia de Dança de Lisboa (Portugal), under the direction of Mark Haim; the Frankfurt Ballet, under the direction of William Forsythe; and the Pretty Ugly Dance Company, under the direction of Amanda Miller. Mr. Schumacher has choreographed for the Companhia de Dança de Lisboa and has collaborated on two occasions with the dancers of the Frankfurt Ballet, creating *Splendor Shed* in 1990 and *Blender Head* in 1994. He continues to perform in Europe with Schwuppdiewupp, a collaborative ensemble that creates cabaret-like theater, fusing dance, vaudeville, and voice.

Lauren Tom (*actress*) began her career in *A Chorus Line* on Broadway. Other theater: *Hurlyburly* and *Doonesbury* (Broadway); *American Notes* (New York Shakespeare Festival, Obie Award). Film: *The Joy Luck Club*, *When a Man Loves a Woman*, *Mr. Jones*, and *With Friends Like These*. Television: *Friends* (as Julie), *Homicide*, and *King of the Hill*. Writing includes *Tiger on the Right* and her autobiographical solo show *25 Psychics*, which both received Dramalogue Awards.

Lin Qiang Xu (*tenor*) studied at the Conservatory of Music in Beijing, the University of Miami Music School, and Manhattan School of Music. A winner of the International Pavarotti Competition, his awards also include first prize in the International Bel Canto Competition. Roles include Rodolfo in *La Bohème* (Shanghai), Duke in *Rigoletto* (Rome), Italian Tenor in *Der Rosenkavalier* (Kiel), Des Grieux in *Manon Lescaut* (Rome), and Marco Polo (Torino, Tokyo).

Yuanlin Chen (*musician*), born in Guiyang, China, began playing the violin at age nine and performed with the Guiyang Beijing Opera Troupe. He studied composition at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where he was appointed a lecturer and established a computer and electronic

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

music studio. In 1991, he was awarded a scholarship at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He earned his PhD in music in 1996.

Joseph Celli (*musician*), a composer and double-reed virtuoso, has been involved in notable developments in American contemporary music and art since the early 1970s, experimenting in extending the boundaries of contemporary music and in interdisciplinary work. He has worked with John Cage, Ornette Coleman, the Kronos Quartet, National Living Treasure Chung, Jae-Guk, and artists on five continents. Mr. Celli has studied African, Korean, and Japanese music, and is director of oodiscs, inc.

David Cossin (*musician*) was born in Queens, New York. His interests range through classical percussion, non-western hand drumming, composition, and improvisation. He studied at the Manhattan School of Music. Specializing in new music, Mr. Cossin has played with such groups as Talujon Percussion Quartet, Newband, the Bang On A Can All-Stars, New Music Consort, and Blue Man Group, and recently with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and the German accordion polka lounge band B Bush.

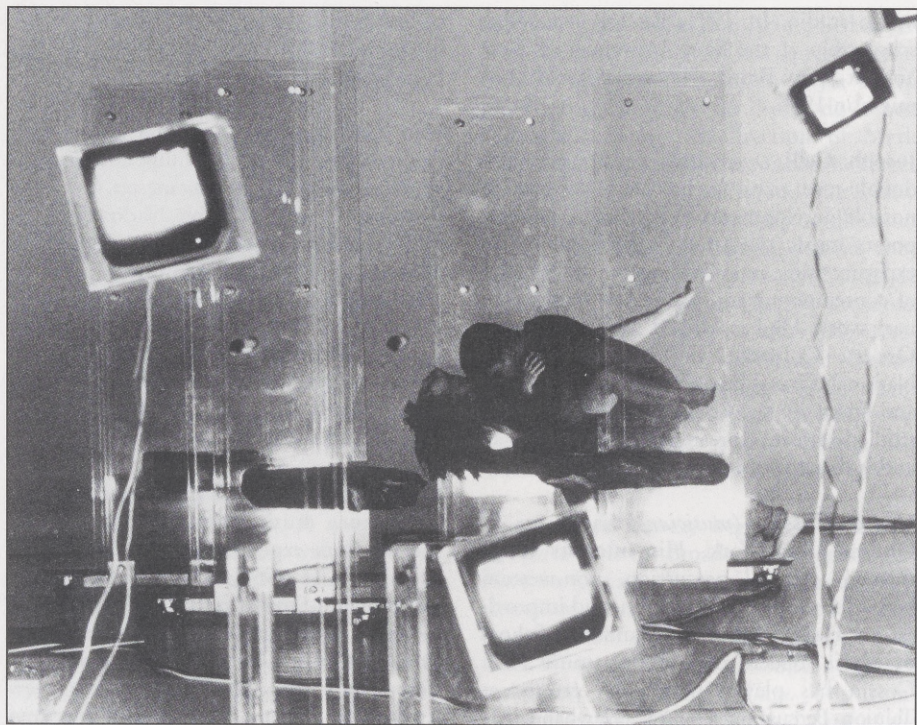
Bruce Gremo (*musician*), a New York-based composer/improviser, performs on the Japanese *shakuhachi*, the Chinese *xun*, and the Indian *bansuri*, and is a flutist and soloist specializing in extended technique playing. A frequent collaborator with Tan Dun, he was the original *xun* soloist in *Orchestral Theater I* and performs as the second conductor in *Orchestral Theater II*. Two solo CDs

of interactive music, *Noisy Hermes 1 and 2*, for multiple flutes and computer, have just been produced.

Min Xiao-Fen (*musician*) was born into a distinguished musical family and learned *pipa* from her father, a *pipa* master. She was a *pipa* soloist with Nanjing National Music Orchestra and won competitions throughout China, representing China in a series of concert tours. Since arriving in America in 1992, she has appeared with New York City Opera, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the San Francisco Opera Orchestra, and the Women's Philharmonic. Her recordings include *The Moon Rising* (Cala).

Steven Osgood's (*conductor*) experience as a conductor, music director, and pianist extends from experimental theater to opera and dance. In 1996, he prepared the premiere of Tan Dun's *Marco Polo*, and assisted in its recording. He has worked with the Santa Fe Opera, Canadian Opera Company, American Opera Projects, and the New Amsterdam Singers. Mr. Osgood prepared the premiere of *Ashoka's Dream* by Peter Lieberson and recently conducted the premiere of Paula Kimper's *Patience and Sarah* (Lincoln Center Festival).

Wang Zhensheng (*musician*) began to study string fiddle at the age of 10. He is a graduate of the Jiang Su Institute of Performing Arts, where he then taught *kunqu* music and percussion from 1983-85. In 1985, he was appointed to Jiangsu Kunqu Theater as a resident drummer. Between 1990 and 1993, he served as the deputy head of the musical team. He was the music director of the New York Kunqu Society from 1993-97.



One stroke and a thousand colors

Composer Tan Dun talks to director Peter Sellars
about composing the music for *Peony Pavilion*

Peter Sellars: In the tradition of Chinese opera, the music is not written down. There are certain formulas and then the performers themselves are controlling the formulas. Can you talk about the “patterns” in your composition?

Tan Dun: That is the part in my music that “re-continues” from the tradition of the *kun* opera; the patterns that I designed continue the oral music tradition. In the tradition of *kun* opera music, not everything is notated on paper. It reaches its full potential only with the working relationship between the musicians—how they communicate with each other during a performance. Why not continue this oral tradition today? It is fantastic to have these patterns as bridges

between the major sections of the composition. They not only physically link each section, and cushion each theatrical structure, but they also create a chain that puts all of the performers/participants in touch spiritually. So we “re-continue” in this tradition of using improvisational patterns. Although these patterns are improvisational, they are also extremely controlled.

Even though I’m the composer, I would love to, like in the old times, participate in the performance. When Monteverdi wrote an opera, he himself probably played something in the band. I would love to do that, too, but I can also take advantage of today’s technology, so I thought, why don’t I record my own improvisations according to the theatrical structure? I recorded several patterns

PROGRAM NOTES

and notated things in a certain graphic way, indicating pitch and dynamics to allow an improvisational but controlled process.

PS: It looks really unusual on music paper.

TD: It's like a painting. It sounds like a painting, but also you cannot avoid notating it like a painting. To me, the patterns are like a spiritual chain. Like I said, it is "re-continuing" from the *kunqu* tradition.

PS: Could you talk about how the patterns work in the *kunqu* tradition—a subject is mentioned and then there is a musical response . . .

TD: Yes, there are several kinds of traditions in the *kun* theater. They have orally passed down these patterns through history; these patterns were not written down but the musicians know how to play them. It's like a big Madison Avenue shopping mall—when you need something, you go search through those patterns to find the right music for the emergency of the spiritual need at a given moment in the play. They have thousands of patterns—patterns for "floating" and something for chasing, or for happy moments, or for a ceremony. But how are these elements organized? How are they put together? The musicians working together on the improvisational patterns must work at a high artistic level. Everyone has their own interpretations. For example, the patterns that I designed will work in a similar way to the traditional *kun* opera patterns, because when different people play along with my pre-recorded vocal improvisations of each pattern, the results will be totally different.

When you first talked to me about this project, for the first two months I had no idea, really. Then, after two months, I had ideas changing every day, going back and forth, impossible to settle as one kind of thing. But the ideas always appeared in parallel: here is Monteverdi singing with his Baroque fiddles, and here is Tang Xianzu singing with his *pipa*, perhaps. Then, on one side, Hua Wenyi is talking to Peter Sellars about making something new, and on the

other side, the young operatic singer Ying Huang is talking to me, saying, "I just want to try something new." It's an older generation and younger generation; it's Monteverdi and Tang Xianzu. It's *kun* opera and a contemporary development of western opera; medieval and rock 'n' roll; traditions of the *kun* opera, Peking opera, *Kabuki*. Everything is parallel, a circle, a mosaic image: out of many, but as one!

PS: Monteverdi and Tang Xianzu are located at a certain moment in time, and one feels that connection. But also, it goes backwards in time. Tang Xianzu was writing at the end of the Ming Dynasty, which is a very special period, but set the play in the Sung Dynasty. You also reach backwards in time musically. Would you talk a little bit about the parallel between the Sung Dynasty and medieval music—that tone, that texture, and what that world is?

TD: I have to tell you, sometimes when I do something, it is just by instinct. I'm driven by a ghost. Sometimes I don't know what I am doing, but when I am finished, when I hear the sound, then I figure out what I did. It's like the Daoist people always say: "Everything is on track." You don't know what you are doing, but everything has been designed; it is on track.

What's interesting is the music before our contemporary age (I mean music before the Baroque period). Music before that point, I think, has a much similar character. There are basic qualities of spirit in common among all kinds of music—it doesn't matter if you are from east or west, north or south. Music from the last 50 years emphasizes too much from its own geographic and cultural point of view, and sees the world and people just from its own point of view; it's becoming more and more out of touch.

It is on the track. You cannot get rid of it. I don't want to use "crossover" as a word to describe what's happening now, but the result is very interesting. "Crossover," if you have to use this term, allows for a bigger choice of resources, but meanwhile also makes "personality" more and more difficult. The most

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important thing is finding your own expression or language.

In Chinese, the word *art* is two words—*Ar-t*. *Ar-* means “magical games” and *-t* means “spiritual fantasy.” In Chinese, the two never separate, and the perfect combination of both is called *art*. So, I like this language more than when we say “art” in English. That’s actually one way to do it. On the surface, it seems like we have a long way to go in dealing with the balance of language, the style of language, the balance of style, the counterpointing of different ages, the counterpointing of different languages, the counterpointing of different theatrical traditions, the reunification of all kinds of things—all this should be blended entirely as one new kind of style, a new language. It is so fresh, but meanwhile it is so exciting and so challenging.

PS: What’s interesting to me is that, for you, it’s not crossover because you are not going from anywhere to anywhere—you live there. I mean, the score actually represents all the things in your life, so it’s not that you have to go hunting for something like an anthropologist.

TD: Yes, because I’m living in New York, a hell plus a heaven. I said I don’t want to use the word “crossover,” but sometimes my inner gut is all crossover. You know, sometimes I feel my liver is on the left side and my heart is at the bottom of my stomach. It doesn’t matter, because that is the way I experience today. Anyway, to me it doesn’t matter what you are doing, whatever thing you are dealing with, modern or old, or different languages, because actually nothing is repeating. I understand that what I am doing is not writing medieval opera, because I can’t. Nobody can say they can do the same as Hildegard von Bingen or Tang Xianzu. Actually, what I am doing musically is really trying to communicate. It is very much from my own response, a direct response from my own imagination, from my own eye and attitude, to see this piece of art. So this is why it comes up in my score like a mosaic. There

are many parallels to those resources from Tang Xianzu, Monteverdi, early medieval music and Chinese Sung Dynasty music, paintings, languages, western opera and Chinese opera, and today’s young people’s music, like pop, rap, rock, jazz, and art music. Maybe 10 years ago, people would treat those kind of things as a contradiction. I don’t think it will be a contradiction anymore. It works just the same when you are dealing with life. So to me, the materials we are handling are counterpointing from different ages of the media. It’s not a funky big game. It is serious. There is something happening within me. I don’t want to call it a new language, but it is really, really heating me inside. I find that it is natural to respond to these kind of words from Tang Xianzu. The good thing is that I also find in your staging that there is a new language there. It is parallel with the music. Those things work perfectly together.

PS: What’s so beautiful is the way you take this Chinese vocal technique as a way to extend western vocal technique, and at the same time, you arrive at a point where you don’t know which is which.

TD: When you go to western opera or eastern opera, you might find it very boring. This is because they are handling their voices in one way only. Today, any single artist in the world, physically or non-physically, they are carrying with them all kinds of experiences, but speak out for one goal, one structure, and one style of his/her own. Peter, how many languages do you speak? French, English, Chinese. But why, when you express yourself musically, do you have to limit yourself to one kind of expression? I feel that this is impossible—in my expression, at least. When I read a sentence of Tang Xianzu, the melodic lines come out automatically, combining these things together: *kun* accent with deep Italian medieval things and also with the haunting sound of Tibetan monks. I didn’t try artificially to make it perfect—it just comes out; it’s a gift. Of course, it’s no longer just *kun* opera or Italian or Tibetan anymore.

PS: And with these fantastic beyond-Baroque ornaments . . .

TD: To me, I just find the whole thing is like going backwards. If you go backwards, you feel things more *avant garde* and much deeper; I don't know why. I also believe that a million years ago, musical communication on different continents between different races was based more on basic human instincts. I think my musical expression is really constructed on my basic instincts. It just floats up like that.

PS: What is so striking is that, in your music for *Peony Pavilion*, there is melody after melody after melody. I mean, do you know many pieces that have been written in the last 50 years with this much melody?

TD: You know why—because there is a kind of poison in the head of all composers. It's exactly like James Levine telling me how orchestra people are afraid to play *pianissimo*; they don't believe how quiet they can play. Composers are afraid to draw only melodic lines on paper. They are afraid of just one line going on and on. I don't know why they are afraid. This is why I said, look at Monteverdi or *kun* opera and how *avant garde* that is. Incredible! To me, line and linear relationship in my mind or in my thinking is much more important than multiple layers or harmonic or counterpoint construction. It is like a lot of early Chinese painting and calligraphy: one stroke and thousands of counterpoints are there already. You listen to one stroke of Hua Wenyi's singing and a thousand colors are there. One thing that is quite tragic is that a lot of musicians don't believe that one line of their playing already includes many, many colors and many, many counterpoints and harmonies. Of course, this is in my tradition—in calligraphy, in music, in painting. I think I was quite confident, and driven by this tradition as well, to approach this opera as if I were

From Tan Dun's score for *Peony Pavilion*

holding a pencil and drawing one endless line. In this piece, I never just treat melody as an element, but as something very complex or multi-dimensional. To me, it is a line, a line directly from the heart; it is an endless going on. That's what you feel when you read Cyril Birch's translation of Tang Xianzu's text. You feel it is one line driving you endlessly towards an unlimited timespace. Endlessly enchanting. Flowing passion. With this text, there is no other choice. As a composer, one side of the work is very technical, setting music to the words, sound to sound. But meanwhile, it is like singing. Composing is just singing. Composing is improvising. And improvising is composing. Improvising is the most natural condition of your composing. If you don't know how to improvise, how can you invent your own structure, techniques, and sensational colors?

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PS: It is so amazing to watch you coach the singers and, for that matter, the instrumentalists; so much more appears than what's on the paper.

TD: Most composers, including myself, in many, many circumstances are slaves to the notation system. We often try to find a way to make music sound exactly like the notation. But what's the meaning of doing that? All the notation developed so far—and I'm sure in the next couple of thousand years, it will still exist in this way—has the permanent shortcomings of written music. Music is such a live thing, directly from your heart. You can not write down anything directly from your heart on paper. To me, I always think that notation reflects just half of your heart voice. This is why, when we finished the score, when I rehearse with the orchestra, when I coach singers, I'm sort of adding another 50%. I'm sure Mozart and Monteverdi did the same thing. It's just that today, we have forgotten this. I think this is something that we have to pay attention to. This is why we need many good conductors for old and new music!

PS: One of the most spectacular parts of the score is this immense shaman ceremony. It really evokes a time when music was purely functional, where music really is this contact between life and death, and is working; it's not a leisure activity, it's something else . . .

TD: The ritual part that Shi Jiehua does is the key. When I started composing the music and included Shi Jiehua as an important character in the second part, I had to find a way for it to be convincing that this character is there as a bridge, linking the current life and the life beyond, the other world. I think the ritual part is a key point. I was trying to use all the memories of my early childhood Daoist ceremonies to find a kind of image of a person who is a shaman—a person who is

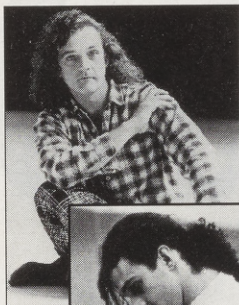
in between real life and another real life, which is death. To the Chinese, when you are living, it is a live life, and when you are dead, another life starts, another world. This is obvious in Tang Xianzu's play.

PS: Would you say something about working with the *kunqu* music and musicians, because you really have worked a lot with them.

TD: You know, to me, the way I worked with *kunqu* performers is the same way I worked with musicians from the Metropolitan Opera. I don't think that there is any difference. The only difference is the difference that people themselves see; to me, there is no difference. To me, the gestures, the lines, the way you modernize the passion to deal with the historical materials—it's the same way. It is closely associated with your basic instincts—the way I talk to them about line, about the shape, about the pronunciation and punctuation, and also about how important it is to find your most truthful feelings. A lot of musicians are not calm, deep down. When you read something or play something, you are not really calm deep down, you are somehow too busy in your mind. It's like somebody loves you and you don't know. Actually, there is so much love in this material and you just don't know. If you knew it, you might let yourself embrace this material. This is what I was trying to explain to them. This object can only be alive if you feel it and love it, and later you find you have become something else, and have also become loved by it. This is the way I worked with all the *kunqu* performers, and not only because I trained in the Chinese theater. I think I shared many many things with them, much more on a human basis. Just calm down. It is meditation. Emphasize feeling. Deeply driven by feeling, you will suddenly see the music's shape. What is the meaning of a line? It is a whole life.

MARK MORRIS

Onstage in Conversation

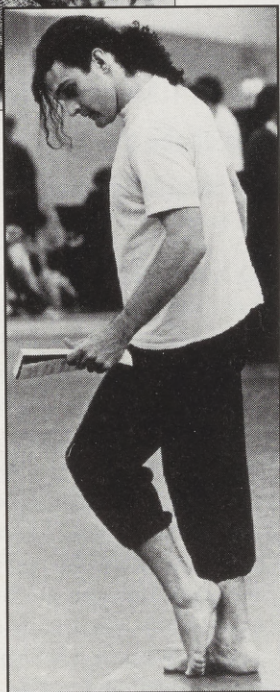


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The Joy of Futurist

With help from the carnivorous Italian Futurist F. T. Marinetti, the Peabody Trio and composer Aaron Jay Kernis shake the table of bourgeois cuisine. STACEY KORS previews the musical platter.



WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU take a cube of raw beef, pass an electric current through it, then marinate it for 24 hours in a mixture of rum, cognac, and white vermouth? Music, actually, according to Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Aaron Jay Kernis.

"Raw Meat Torn by Trumpet Blasts" is one of the recipes featured in Kernis' *Le Quattro Stagioni dalla Cucina Furismo* (*The Four Seasons of Futurist Cuisine*), which will be presented by San Francisco Performances at the Herbst Theatre next month. The less-than-mouth-watering piece will be performed by the Peabody Trio.

A five-movement work for violin, cello, piano, and narrator, *Le Quattro Stagioni* was written in 1991 and takes its text from *The Futurist Cookbook*—a rather bizarre, late manifestation of the Italian Futurist art movement, written by F. T. Marinetti in 1932. The cookbook was

Cooking

“designed to wrench food out of the nineteenth-century ‘bourgeois’ past and bring it into the dynamic, technological, urban twentieth century,” explains Lesley Chamberlain in her introduction to the work.

“It’s at least partly tongue-in-cheek,” says Peabody Trio pianist (and former San Francisco Conservatory of Music student) Seth Knopp. “The Futurists were trying to liberate language and art and general life conventions.”

Although this is the first piece by Kernis that the Peabody Trio has performed, the Baltimore-based group is no stranger to modern music, having worked with contemporary composers such as Shulamit Ran, Bright Sheng, Charles Wuorinen, and Leon Kirchner. “We’d like to be thought of as friends of new music,” says Knopp. “But we also feel it’s very important to be doing more traditional—I mean, more established—repertoire,” he says, adding, “even some of the more established repertoire is not at all traditional.”

But no matter how “untraditional” many of the works are in the Trio’s repertoire, none comes close to *Le Quattro Stagioni*. “It certainly skirts the limits of what is known to take place in a concert hall,” says Knopp. “So it should be very exciting to perform—and a lot of fun to watch.”

“The music is a little like the text—part comic and part serious,” he explains. “There are sections that are very virtuosic and skittish and agitated, and also sections of great beauty. At one point, the cellist and violinist have to sing ‘O Sole Mio’ together; at another point, they make...kind of yummy sounds, like they’re eating.”

Bon appetit!

Stacey Kors is a San Francisco-based arts writer who writes frequently about classical music for Stagebill, Salon, and the S.F. Weekly.

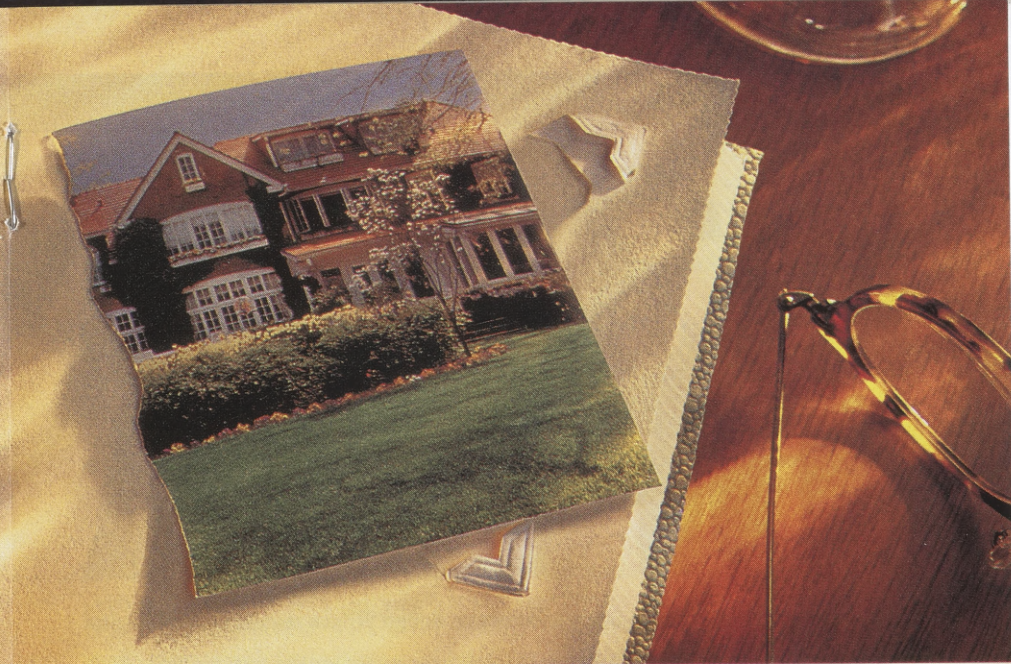
Trio tartare: on April 12, the Peabody Trio (opposite) chews on Marinetti and Kernis.



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3-D OPERA

Visionary composer Philip Glass and director Robert Wilson reunite to remix digital art and the words of the Sufi mystic Rumi, whose poems are the text for the multimedia opera *Monsters of Grace*. Thanks to Cal Performances, the meditative new work plays at Berkeley's Zellerbach Hall, April 13–17. RANDY GENER reports.

As you face the enormous movie screen and put on the 3-D glasses provided for each performance of *Monsters of Grace*, you may experience a sense of déjà vu. Maybe you've visited Disney World's Epcot Center lately, or maybe you've seen one of those spectacular 3-D movies at a Sony IMAX Theater. Those chic blue shades, made of plastic and cardboard, feel like a retro-kitsch throwback to 1950s drive-in movies. Designed by L.A. Eye-works, the polarized lenses block out any light that does not vibrate at a particular angle and send two separate images to your brain. It is the combination of the slightly different left and right images that produce the appearance of three-dimensional space.

In other words, those lightweight 3-D shades give not merely an optical illusion, but a vantage point from which to view apparitions. They are portable windows that open out on an ever-widening field of dreams. *Monsters of Grace*, a 68-minute film consisting of 13 scenes, blends computer-generated images by director-designer Robert Wilson and music by composer Philip Glass as performed live by the four singers, woodwinds, and computer keyboards that make up the Philip Glass Ensemble.

"In *Monsters of Grace*, we are really looking at Bob's dreams, his dreams of reality," says Glass, referring to his *Einstein on the Beach* collaborator, Robert Wilson. "The beauty of computerized graphics is that it looks like you're seeing a ring of fire on the ocean, and it is not really there."

Glass's rapturous music, set to ecstatic love poems by 13th-century Persian mystic Jalal ud-Din Rumi, accompanies Wilson's mysteriously elegant and starkly meditative images that appear, disappear, hover in the air, and slowly drift by our eyes. Some are sharply concrete: a little boy rides a bicycle toward the camera; a helicopter buzzes over the Great Wall of China. Others are spookily abstract: an enormous hand floats over the orchestra pit, pokes a finger in your eye, and is sliced by a scalpel through the palm.

These phantasmal 70mm pictures of landscapes, objects, hawks, or human figures (the latter dubbed "synthespians") were executed by Kleiser-Walczak Construction, the computer animation company responsible for the special effects in such Hollywood movies as *Stargate* and *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*. Strictly speaking, *Monsters of Grace* was not directed by Wilson, yet its ritualistic pace, scenic elements, and richly colorful visual structure are deeply influenced by the artist's aesthetic.

Intriguingly, Wilson's visual ideas, Rumi's deceptively simple words, and Glass's electronic sampling of Persian instruments don't illustrate one another. The logical connections are intentionally blurred. "Don't go to sleep," says Rumi. "People are going back and forth across the doorsill where the two worlds touch. The door is round and open. Don't go back to sleep."

Reality is deceptive. Moving in and out of passionate knowing, *Monsters of Grace* is like a river of longing and mystery; transformations flow through it with restless variety. Images emerge, re-form, and dissolve; they unfold and disintegrate again. The ever-changing quality of the work represents a yearning for wonder.

Although hyped as a "digital opera in three dimensions," *Monsters of Grace* does not render opera and classical music obsolete. Instead it challenges their immediacy. It redefines established artistic forms by exploring how they interface with the reality of new media. "To be truthful," muses Glass, "it is a way of working with new ideas and creating new interest in music. Every piece I do is a thinly disguised strategy to change my music." Far from making new technology transparent, part of the pleasure the viewers get from *Monsters of Grace* issues precisely from its technological complexity: we delight in wearing those sleek blue shades.

The title *Monsters of Grace* results from a malapropism: while performing a one-man show, Wilson kept twisting his tongue on Hamlet's line when sees his father's ghost: "Angels and



Glasses for Glass: you'll see the music in *Monsters of Grace*.

ministers of grace defend us!" Glass knew of Wilson's tongue-glitch and thought about its implications: "Years later, it occurred to me that human love is a doorway into the divine. So 'grace' refers to a divine activity that is given as a gift to humans. A state of grace elevates you out of the human. The monsters are us, the 'defective souls' that Aquinas refers to. Thus the piece is about the transformation of the ordinary world through the divine."

Or as Rumi says: "Open the window in the center of your chest, and let the spirits fly in and out."

Randy Gener, a frequent Stagebill contributor, writes for the New York Times, Newark's Star-Ledger, the Village Voice, and other publications.

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Lauren Tom and Madame Hua Wenyi both appear in the role of Du Liniang.

In Conversation with Hua Wenyi

Susan Pertel Jain: You are one of the most gifted performing artists of your generation, and the role of Du Liniang in Tang Xianzu's *Peony Pavilion* is your most famous dramatic role. Would you speak a bit about your history with this role?

Hua Wenyi: I entered the Shanghai Chinese Opera School at the age of 12 and began to study the role of Du Liniang after I had completed my first two or three years of full-time training. My teacher, Zhu Quanming, taught me to perform the role of Du Liniang in *You yuan, jing meng* ("Strolling in the Garden, Stirred by a Dream"). These two scenes are usually performed as a single piece. The performance tradition for *Strolling, Stirred* is considered very complex and artistically complete. A performer must constantly dance while singing the arias and duets. This is a very difficult scene, which is why it is not

taught to students until after they have mastered the movement of *kunqu* and have developed good vocal technique.

SPJ: How would you describe your performance of Du Liniang at that period of time?

HW: Empty. I was just a child. I asked my teacher to explain the meaning of that scene. He always replied that even if he could explain it to me, I would not understand. He said that I had to wait until I grew up.

SPJ: Did growing up make a difference in your performance?

HW: Yes, but also having the opportunity to work on many new theatrical projects. For example, soon after graduation, I participated in a production of *White Snake* directed by a *jingju* (Beijing opera) stage director

PROGRAM NOTES

named Li Zigui. He taught me how to really understand and carve out dramatic characters. Our *kunqu* teachers never emphasized this aspect of performance.

SPJ: *Kunqu* and *jingju* are just two of over 350 different forms of Chinese opera (*xiqu*). Could you briefly discuss the similarities that unite these forms into a single theatrical tradition, and those which differentiate them?

HW: Although Mandarin is the national language of China, most *xiqu* forms use local language dialects in performance. The vocal music and the orchestra are also different in each *xiqu* form.

SPJ: What does the phrase *chang, nian, zuo, da* ("song, speech, movement/acting, stage combat/acrobatics") mean to a Chinese opera performer?

HW: These are the most basic skills of Chinese opera performance. These four skills are considered the foundations of our tradition. They are the tools we use to create our characters.

SPJ: What are your feelings regarding the issues of preservation versus innovation in *kunqu*?

HW: I feel strongly that what is good in the *kunqu* tradition should be preserved. There have been many great *kunqu* artists who have created fine works. If someone does not have the ability to surpass the work of these master artists, I do not believe that they should freely alter the masterpieces of our tradition. Works that do not stand the test of time, however, can and should be improved upon. *Kunqu*, like all artistic traditions, must remain in touch with its audience.

Innovation and experimentation help to strengthen a tradition, not wipe out its past.

SPJ: Is this what drew you to participate in this production?

HW: Yes. It has been very interesting for me to work with someone outside the Chinese opera tradition. Although I have, no doubt, been able to teach Peter Sellars a bit about the *kunqu* tradition and about Chinese culture, I have learned so much from him. Peter has helped me to perceive my own tradition from a new perspective and to understand how non-Chinese audiences view our work. For years, I have been trying to add new creative vocabulary to the *kunqu* performance tradition that would help keep our art form relevant to modern audiences. With regards to *Peony Pavilion*, I was very interested when Peter told me that he perceived this play as a work that addressed modern concerns and issues. Although from a wealthy family, Du Liniang died hundreds of years ago of spiritual and physical hunger, conditions that continue to face many people in contemporary society. This play is not just a relic from the past. It is a story of the present.

SPJ: As a contemporary of the Elizabethan stage, *kunqu* is today one of the world's oldest continuous theater traditions. How would you respond to those who question your desire to innovate?

HW: If I do not challenge myself as an artist, I will no longer remain one. Those who came before me in this tradition also followed along this path, which is, no doubt, why our tradition continues to survive.

Dr. Susan Pertel Jain is an associate editor of the Asian Theatre Journal.

Some Comments from the Translator

Cyril Birch, the translator of *Peony Pavilion*, has also written an entertaining introduction to the art of the elite theater of late-Ming China. In his recent book, *Scenes for Mandarins* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), he presents translated scenes from a selection of plays, including *Peony Pavilion*, with extensive commentary and detailed descriptions of the way they would have been performed. Here are some extracts:

On a performance in the Mandarin's residence:

It will all be very intimate: half a dozen actors of the governor's household troupe, a trio of musicians in accompaniment, flute, lute, and wooden clappers at the side of the stage. Perhaps a garden pavilion, rising a foot or two above the waters of a small artificial lake. In an open-fronted lodge across a few feet of water, a select audience of a dozen or so sit at their ease as the sinuous melodies wind through the summer afternoon. Or perhaps it is evening, and dishes are being served by the light of oil-lamps and candles in the reception hall of the Prefect's residence. The guests' tables are so arranged as to provide the best possible view of the actors as they emerge from behind screens to perform their play on the few square yards of carpeted floor.

Birch imagines the birthday celebration of a provincial governor, who has built a new stage in his garden:

He will want his gardens to look their best, the paths swept and the bamboos and blooming tree-peonies displayed to perfection on this already sultry late spring day. The banquet will be choice—his cook has a subtle touch with our local lake fish—and we shall be cool enough because it will be served in the new open-sided hall he has added for summer use. And there will be a play.

I have seen the new hall already. More like a large pavilion, quite spacious, and a graceful addition to the general lines of the residence, with its crimson pillars and lightly

curving gray-tiled eaves. The playhouse gives the effect of an extension of the hall on a smaller scale. It, too, is open-sided, but marked off by a low balustrade. The raised stage will give us a good view of the players as we sit at the table in the main body of the hall, comfortably ensconced on large porcelain stools—nothing so grateful on a humid afternoon as the cool of porcelain through one's silk gown.

On the structure of the typical *chuanqi* play:

The Ming *chuanqi* ("romance") play could run to 40 or 50 scenes or more, and although the lengths varied considerably, it was possible for an individual major scene to be as substantial as an entire act of a Yuan *zaju*. Plays of the *chuanqi* romance kind told stories taken from old legend, from history, from existing tale or ballad, or from the author's imagination. But whatever the source, the action of the play was likely to be fairly complicated. It could involve a score or more of personages, and no matter what the theme, at the center of every play there invariably stood a couple of lovers who, in most cases, would be the principal singers, the stars of the performance.

By convention, the *chuanqi* play—the Ming dramatic romance—opens with a prologue in which a minor character sings a brief resumé of the events to be dramatized. The action begins only in Scene 2, when the first important character of the play now appears. He is the young hero, the juvenile lead, as he would be known in English repertory theater. He introduces himself directly to the audience and in arias and monologue describes his situation in life, his aspirations and fears. In Scene 3, the heroine follows suit, probably in the company of her parents. Most probably, she has not yet met the hero. Each subsequent scene takes the action one step further. It presents one, two, or a small number of characters in a specific location. Since no sets are used, this may be a garden, a boudoir, a jail cell, a mountain top, heaven or hell or

PROGRAM NOTES

the bottom of the sea—or any place imaginable, and the people on stage can change locations any time they wish by merely promenading in a circle and announcing where they have now arrived.

On the fusion of poetry, music, and dance that puts the Chinese southern drama (*chuanqi*), especially the *kunqu* style, at the pinnacle of total theater experience:

The poetic diction of the songs of the plays is a kind of loosened-up derivative of classical Chinese verse. Each song is composed to a specific, set metrical pattern. This is true of northern drama also, but the repertoire of available patterns is much larger for the southern style. It runs into hundreds, and one of the most jealously cherished aspects of the playwright's skill was his selection of the perfect metrical pattern for the effect he desired. Since each metrical pattern would imply a particular basic melody, he was also something of a composer, or at least arranger, of music. The accompaniment of the songs involved much use of gongs and drums for the martial sequences, but the most characteristic feature of southern drama was the use of the flute (as against the harsher stringed instruments of the northern style) to accompany much of the solo singing. The effect was of refinement, almost to the point of languor, as the tremulous slow line of the flute, the modulations of high soprano or falsetto, and the delicate sway of sleeve and fan united to explore the last subtle suggestion of the lyrical text.

On the life of Tang Xianzu:

Tang Xianzu lived from 1550 to 1616. He passed the metropolitan examinations (though Liu Mengmei's Prize Candidacy eluded him) at the age of 33 and began his career as a dramatist during a spell of service in Nanking, when, as a secretary under the Board of Ceremonies, his duties were less than all-consuming. A loyal but hortatory memorial to the Emperor resulted in demotion for him. He never again reached higher rank than district magistrate, and in his late 40s, he retired into private life. In addition to essays and poems, he wrote five plays, of

which *Peony Pavilion* is the masterpiece. In retirement, he personally supervised productions of the play, and it rapidly won wide popularity. Probably a quarter of the scenes were still in the repertoire in the late 19th century.

On the love theme of *Peony Pavilion*:

Has the world ever seen a woman's love to rival that of Bridal Du?

Dreaming of a lover she fell sick; once sick, she became ever worse; and finally, after painting her own portrait as a legacy to the world, she died. Dead for three years, still she was able to live again when, in the dark underworld, her quest for the object of her dream was fulfilled. To be as Bridal Du is truly to have known love.

Love is of source unknown, yet it grows ever deeper. The living may die of it, by its power the dead live again. Love is not love at its fullest if one who lives is unwilling to die for it, or if it cannot restore to life one who has so died. And must the love that comes in dream necessarily be unreal? For there is no lack of dream lovers in this world. Only for those whose love must be fulfilled on the pillow and for whom affection deepens only after retirement from office, is it entirely a corporeal matter . . .

These words are from Tang Xianzu's preface, dated 1598, to his own play. Close in time but halfway across the globe, William Shakespeare had completed *Romeo and Juliet*, his tragedy of star-crossed lovers consumed by the fire of their passion in an inimical world. But for Tang Xianzu, love, passion, *qing* was a force he must celebrate. It was part of the new, humane currents of thought, in those late years of the Ming dynasty, to extol the spontaneous affections of the heart, to demonstrate their triumph over the conventions of the coldly rational.

But love in the form of sexual passion is only one manifestation of *qing* feeling, the entire complex of which is Tang's philosophical concern in his plays: joy and sorrow, fear and anger, desire and hate all have their part to play also. Feeling, in this extended sense, is not only to be celebrated as vital force but

also to be balanced against the transitory nature of life itself—the tyranny of time—and the illusory nature of all worldly phenomena.

Fundamentally, the entire *Peony Pavilion* is Tang Xianzu's protracted meditation on the nature of love. What we may call love he called *qing*, for which the most general equivalent would be "feeling." *Qing*—I will continue to call it "love"—in its highest development, as true love between man and woman, includes sexual attraction, physical passion, but also sentiment, empathy, devotion, the virtues of that broader love that exists also outside the sexual relationship.

There is no doubt about the mutual sexual attraction between the lovers of *Peony Pavilion*, the aristocratic maiden Bridal Du and the young scholar Liu Mengmei. In pursuing their story, Tang Xianzu has them make love, via the most lyrical and picturesque imagery, no fewer than three times. Tang Xianzu is celebrating *qing*, and physical love is a part of *qing*, a part to be exalted. But *qing* itself is more than sexual love. True feeling demands authentication. The lovers' ecstasy, portrayed with a zest that has kept these scenes for ever in the repertoire, is in fact, as the Flower Spirit fears, no more than lust until it has been tested. Liu Mengmei must conquer more than Bridal's maidenhead. He must overcome his fear when he discovers his beloved to be a ghost. Then, further even to this, he must banish all revulsion over the disinterment of her corpse, and have faith in the power of his love to resurrect her physical body. And Bridal, in her turn, must hold fast to her love for him in the chill of the grave and through the shadows of her ghostly wanderings.

She has faced trial in the underworld, and the Judge of the Dead has granted her plea to return to the world of the living, where she must accomplish her predestined fate of union with Liu. Liu, in the meantime, has chanced upon the garden of Bridal's dream, where her body is buried, and there, among the rocks about the peony pavilion, he has discovered the scroll bearing her portrait, painted by herself in the days of her pining.

Enamored of the demure beauty of the portrait, Liu calls out to her. His cries summon the wandering soul of Bridal, which is responding also to the ritual prayers of the Daoist priestess, Sister Stone, charged with the maintenance of Bridal's garden shrine.

On Tang Xianzu as a kind of Chinese Shakespeare:

Bridal's portrait in *Peony Pavilion* exerts something of the same kind of emblematic force as a similar artifact in another dramatic romance, the statue of Hermione in Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*. And in fact, certain parallels between the two plays are close enough for a comparative reading to deepen our understanding and enjoyment of both.

As luck will have it, historical coincidence makes comparison of the two playwrights hard to avoid. Tang Xianzu was born in 1550, 14 years before Shakespeare, and the two men died in the same year, 1616. No doubt, the differences far outweigh the similarities between the England of Elizabeth and the China of the Wanli Emperor. Yet we may point to certain common features vital to the emergence of a major form of drama. Renaissance, Reformation, and the beginnings of modern scientific thought in the West were matched by new currents of intellectual excitement in late Ming China. Bourgeois prosperity in Nanking and Soochow, no less than in London, provided both demand and support for a theater of vigor and wit. The language itself was in flux to an unusual degree, neither English nor colloquial Chinese quite settled yet into definitive patterns. Neologisms and dialect words abound in Tang Xianzu as in Shakespeare, and there is an extraordinary ease of movement between literary and colloquial diction.

Much of the text of a play will be dictated by the circumstances of its intended staging and the nature of its audience. In Ming China, as in Elizabethan London, groundlings would gaze up at the actors on the platform stage above them, while gentlefolk were protected by some small distance or elevation (in the Chinese case, perhaps in a separate garden pavilion or in a gallery across the tem-

PROGRAM NOTES

ple courtyard). There was no curtain, hence the cleared stage becomes the important marker of the break in the action and provides the formal criterion for division into scenes. There were no sets, no furnishings, but the Elizabethan theater used a rear-stage enclosure as tomb or cave, and an upper-stage edifice as battlements or as Cleopatra's monument. Since the Chinese stage seems never to have developed such devices (though it has been suggested that there must have been some kind of framework for stringing people up, from the frequency of such incidents in Yuan plays—just as Liu Mengmei is strung up for a beating in Scene 53 of *Peony Pavilion*, "Interrogation Under the Rod"), we note without too much surprise the numerous transformations that may overtake table and chair, to represent mountain top, judge's bench, boudoir, or whatever.

Winter's Tale is one of Shakespeare's last plays, belonging to the well-marked group that begins with *Pericles* and *Cymbeline* and ends with *The Tempest*. They have been categorized as romances, marked off from the tragedies, the comedies, and the chronicles by specific features. These include a pattern of action that ranges over time and space with utmost disregard for the unities; elevated personages, royal or noble or higher yet, spirits of air or oracles or gods; mixed modes, with elements of both tragic and comic, but working toward a serene final resolution beyond both of these; and the inclusion of elements of the pastoral, of song and dance and masque. Northrop Frye speaks of Shakespeare's last plays as the bedrock of drama, the romantic spectacle out of which all the more specialized forms of drama, such as tragedy and social comedy, have come, and to which they recurrently return.

This concept of an all-encompassing kind of drama, which not only concludes its own action with resolution and reconciliation but in itself rounds off a whole process of development in the history of the theater, is wonderfully applicable to *Peony Pavilion*. Though written midway rather than late in Tang Xianzu's career, it is his most extensive play; and Tang himself is indeed a master-dramatist from the period of fullest flowering of the Ming *chuanqi*. More than any other Chinese play, *Peony Pavilion* exhibits the characteristics of the dramatic romance as defined for Shakespeare's last four plays.

As a final note to our listing of parallels, we should remind ourselves that both *Winter's Tale* and *Peony Pavilion* represent poetic metamorphoses of recent prose fictions. Where Shakespeare drew on Robert Greene's *Pandosto* of 1588, Tang Xianzu used a run-of-the-mill "promptbook"-type story, "Bridal Du Longing for Love Returns in Spirit Form" (*Du Linlang mu se huan hun*). Needless to say, and fortunately for us, each playwright took the greatest liberties with his original.

To return to the intriguing emblems of Bridal Du's portrait and Hermione's statue: by electing to work in the mode of romance, the playwright forswears positivism and frees himself to meditate on the intricate relations between the apparent and the real.

The portrait dominates several scenes. Scene 14, entitled "The Portrait," allows Bridal to sing a paean of praise to her own evanescent beauty as she attempts to record it by painting her own self-portrait. In the succeeding dialogue between mistress and maid, each plays with the "which is real, which is an illusion" theme, and it is interesting that the maid projects a "complete" version of the

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portrait—perfected by the addition of a husband—which is the true destiny of Bridal, in contrast with the apparent actuality of approaching virginal death. The portrait Spring Fragrance imagines, in other words, is closer to what will actually happen than either the actual portrait or its dying author on stage.

Not until 10 scenes later is the portrait disinterred, when Liu Mengmei mistakes it for an image of the Guanyin. Scene 26, “The Portrait Examined,” is a solo scene in which Liu recognizes his error, reads the colophon, which riddles on his name, and falls in love with the painter-subject.

As late as Scene 30, when Bridal, surprised in Liu’s chamber by the inquisitive nuns, conceals herself “here in the shade cast by this beauty’s portrait,” Sister Stone asks:

Surely something moved, yet there is nothing here but this beauty’s portrait—has the spirit of the painting come to life?

The answer must be “yes,” of course. But Bridal is still only halfway on her journey back to the mortal world.

The theatrical effect of Shakespeare’s “statue” in the finale of *Winter’s Tale* is again more concentrated, as Paulina draws back the curtain and Leontes apostrophizes his queen, dead to him for 16 years:

Does the stone rebuke me
For being more stone than it?

—then, in the grand climax, “Hermione comes down,” sending a tingling down the spine of the most hardened cynic in the audience. But the sequence of *Peony Pavilion* scenes, from Scene 26 onward, in which the ghostly form of Bridal flirts, as it were, with the painted semblance, carries with no less effectiveness the underlying theme, the power of love to conquer death and thus to attain a reality which appearances deny.

In a word, the artist—painter in one case, putative sculptor in the other, ingenious playwright in each—has used his powers to reconcile two whose love must triumph.

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Peony Pavilion

by Tang Xianzu

Cyril Birch,

English translation

Tan Dun, *composer*

Peter Sellars, *director*

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AND SUN, MAR 7, 3 PM

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Richard Goode,
piano

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of Roma Music
& Dance

SAT, MAR 13, 8 PM

ZH (SOLD OUT)

Angelika
Kirchschlager,
mezzo-soprano

SUN, MAR 14, 3 PM

HH (SOLD OUT)

Mark Morris
Dance Group

THU-SAT, MAR 18-20, 8 PM

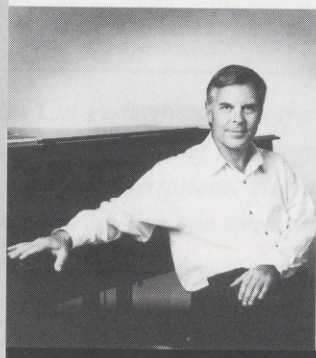
AND SUN, MAR 21, 3 PM

ZH \$20, \$35, \$45

Trio Fontenay

SUN, MAR 21, 3 PM

HH \$28

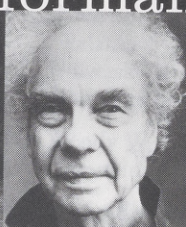
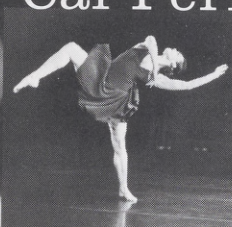
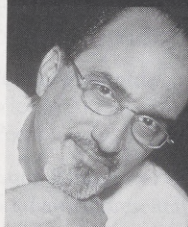


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Murray Perahia, piano

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ZH \$14, \$20, \$26

Stephen Kovacevich, piano

SUN, APR 25, 3 PM
HH \$26

Monsters of Grace

by Robert Wilson
& Philip Glass

TUE-SAT, APR 13-17, 8 PM
ZH \$22, \$32, \$42

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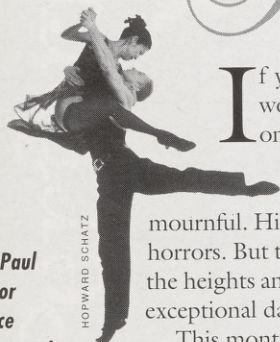
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Multifaceted choreographer Paul Taylor and his talented company do a triple-header of programs at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in April.

SUSAN REITER looks at the choreographer's luminous career and anticipates the delights to come for San Francisco audiences.

Taylor-Made *Inspiration*



HOWARD SCHATZ

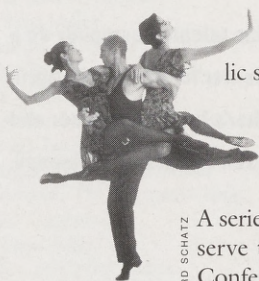
The Paul Taylor Dance Company in Piazzolla Caldera (above) and The Word

If you're going to take a month to immerse yourself in the works of a single choreographer, Paul Taylor is definitely the one to choose. As Bay Area audiences will discover in April, Taylor's repertory incorporates a wide range of moods, from the romantic to the idyllic, from the hilarious to the mournful. His dances can conjure up ancient rites as well as contemporary horrors. But they are always recognizably the work of a man who explores the heights and depths of the human experience through the bodies of his exceptional dancers.

This month is a veritable Taylor festival. Not only will the 16-member Paul Taylor Dance Company be offering three different programs at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (April 7-18), but its feisty six-year-old junior troupe, Taylor 2, will be in residence, giving performances and taking its outreach activities into the community. Senior Taylor dancers will lead a repertory workshop for Bay Area professional dancers, and Taylor himself will be



LOIS GREENFIELD



HOWARD SCHATZ

working with emerging choreographers to explore the past and future of their chosen profession. There will also be public screenings of Taylor dances that have been preserved on film.

A highlight of the company's performances will be the reconstruction of Taylor's unusual *Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rehearsal). Created in 1980, it has not been performed since 1993; most of its current cast will be new to their roles.

A series of open company rehearsals will offer the opportunity to observe the reconstruction process in action, and a three-day Critics Conference (April 9–11) will allow dance writers to explore this work from various angles. It will also include panel discussions and speakers on many aspects of the Taylor repertory. During the conference, there will be a screening of *Dancemaker*, Matthew Diamond's 90-minute documentary about Taylor and the company.

These days, one finds few true modern dance companies—those that carry on the tradition of an individual's urgent artistic vision. The Paul Taylor Dance Company, after nearly 45 years, sustains that tradition, performing the works of one brilliant choreographer. Born in 1930, first attracted to painting as a career, Taylor joined the swim team at college and came to realize that, as he put it during a recent public television profile, "What I liked to do was move." He found his way to the American Dance Festival, at that time the mecca for American modern dance, fell under the spell of Martha Graham, the grande dame and diva of the field, and soon began dancing in her company.

Within a few years, however, he felt the urge to create his own dances, to explore and express his own interests through movement rather than embody Graham's heroic visions. In the time-honored

modern-dance tradition in which nascent choreographers break free like rebellious offspring from the choreographers who nurtured them,

Taylor needed to find out what he could do on his own.

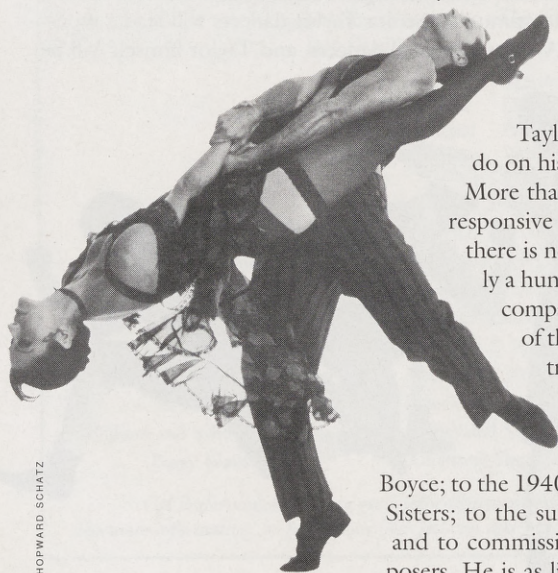
More than four decades later, both he and his responsive audiences are still discovering that there is no limit to what he can achieve. Nearly

a hundred dances have come forth, and his company—which tours extensively—is one of the most respected and admired dance troupes in the world. Taylor finds in-

spiration in almost every kind of music. He has created masterpieces to Bach, Handel, and

Boyce; to the 1940s popular tunes sung by the Andrews Sisters; to the sultry tango music of Astor Piazzolla; and to commissioned scores by contemporary composers. He is as likely to find inspiration in the 1960s

Taylor tango:
Piazzolla Caldera
(above and
below)



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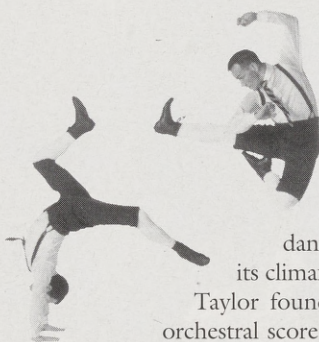
The "Mozart of modern dance" (*The Washington Post*) and his company of gifted dancers return with joyful interpretations of Brahms love songs (performed live) plus a world premiere.

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**In the beginning:
Taylor's *The Word***

pop sounds of Harry Nilsson as he is to explore the intricacies of Charles Ives and Edgard Varèse.

When he turned to Stravinsky's legendary *Rite of Spring* score, Taylor was entering territory that had attracted many choreographers before him, ever since Vaslav Nijinsky nearly started a riot with his version in 1913. Choreographers since Nijinsky have followed a similar path; dozens of dances feature writhing masses of dancers working up a sweat as the pulsating score builds to its climax.

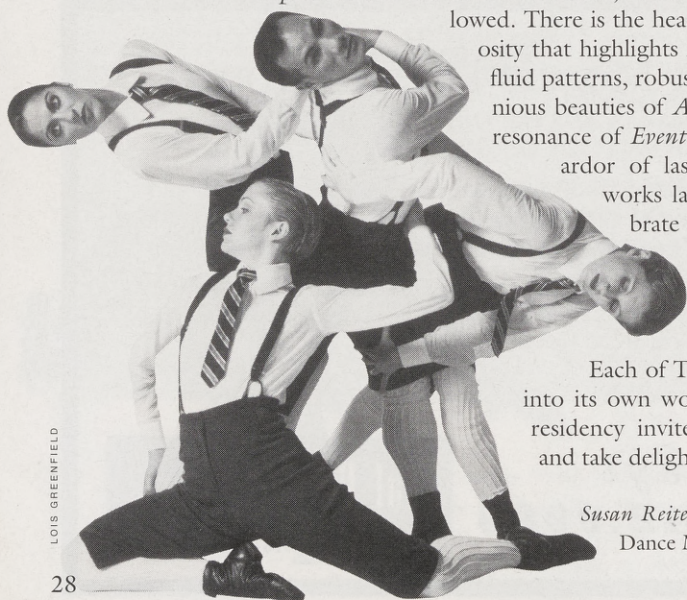
Taylor found his own approach. First, he jettisoned the familiar orchestral score and chose to use the surprisingly dense and expressive two-piano version. His cast numbered only twelve, but he made the most of them. In his layered scenario, a dance company in rehearsal overlaps with the tale of a young woman (*The Girl*) with a baby, the stalwart *Private Eye* who comes to her rescue, a sleazy *Crook*, and his *Stooge* and *Mistress*. Using stylized movement, Taylor blends comic-strip wackiness and silent-film clichés with gut-wrenching compression. One of his most powerful works, *Sacre* is sly and poignant, witty and horrific.

The extensive Taylor repertory to be performed at Yerba Buena includes an exceptional sampling of the work he has created since he himself stopped performing in the mid-1970s. Large, athletic, and uncannily graceful, Taylor (some of whose finest performances have been preserved on film) was a distinctive, quirky dancer, and the end of his performing career might have created a void for his company. But the first work he made after leaving the stage—*Esplanade*, in 1975—announced a new creative phase for him, and in concentrating on the vibrant individuals he had cultivated, he moved to an even higher level of choreography.

Esplanade became an instant classic, and a wealth of works have followed. There is the headlong rush of male virtuosity that highlights *Arden Court* (1981); the fluid patterns, robust partnering, and harmonious beauties of *Airs* (1978); the autumnal resonance of *Eventide* (1997); the ritualistic ardor of last year's *The Word*. His works laugh at our foibles, celebrate our aspirations, point out our baser natures; he examines both the social bonds and the isolation of human existence.

Each of Taylor's dances invites you into its own world; this month's Taylor residency invites audiences to discover and take delight in those worlds.

Susan Reiter is a contributing editor at Dance Magazine.



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STAGEBILL WORDPLAY

ANSWERS TO PUZZLE ON
PAGE 30

March Madness

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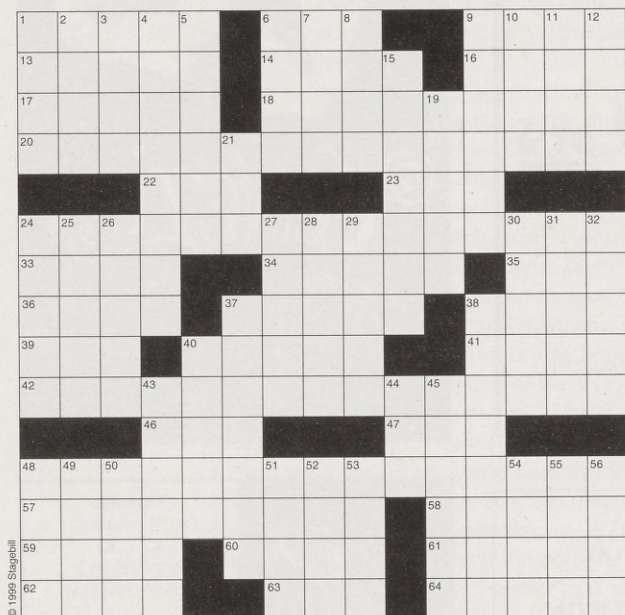
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STAGELINE WORDPLAY

March Madness

by Matt Jones



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ACROSS

1. Soprano Dame Nellie
6. Asta, to Nick and Nora
9. Peruvian ancestor
13. "Let's Make ____"
14. Car stereo brand
16. Broadway brightener
17. As a whole
18. His role is not a happy one
20. Sousa march of 1929
22. Deli delicacy
23. *Boyz n the Hood* actress Long
24. Sousa march of 1877
33. Crosby, Stills & Nash, for one
34. Goneril's sister
35. Airline to Stockholm
36. Lip ointment
37. Sounds from little bells
38. Fontanne's mate
39. "____ a silly question..."
40. Tara resident Scarlett

41. "Do I dare to ____ peach?" (Eliot)
42. Sousa march of 1926
46. Mellow, like wine
47. Polka figure?
48. Sousa march of 1917
57. Extends a building again
58. Bay window
59. Hungarian leader Nagy
60. Eastern European resident
61. 1973 Rolling Stones hit
62. Jazz vibraphonist Jackson
63. Clairvoyant's claim
64. Sacred song

DOWN

1. *You've Got ____* (Hanks/Ryan film)
2. Silent films star Purviance
3. Joplin's "Maple ____ Rag"
4. Locale for a foxtrot
5. Bronze and pewter, for two

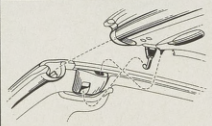
6. Abbr. on an inventor's document
7. The Emerald Isle
8. "____ brillig, and the slithy toves..."
9. One of ten in a Christie title
10. Felix and Oscar's creator
11. ____ *Miner's Daughter*
12. *The King and I* character
15. Business meeting outlines
19. Perrier competitor
21. Notes that follow do
24. Stat for Pete Rose
25. Cymbal sound
26. Poet Rainer Maria
27. Three-tone chord
28. *The Dream* painter Rousseau
29. British actress Samantha
30. Regular's diner order, with "The"
31. African language family
32. Abbr. on a cornerstone
37. Ali Baba's fortysome
38. College speaker's stands
40. Bach fugue instrument
43. British seabird
44. Beethoven's "____ to Joy"
45. "Not on your life!"
48. Quick job for a barber
49. Prefix for "sphere"
50. "Fatha" Hines of jazz
51. Wheel shaft
52. Grazing sites
53. Invitation request
54. Latvian capital
55. Bridal headwear
56. K-6, in some places: abbr.

Answers on page 29

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